

## Public Health Alert- Norovirus Prevention Tips

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is seeing a significant number of gastrointestinal illness outbreaks across Massachusetts this winter, which are likely caused by norovirus infections.

Norovirus is a highly contagious illness caused by infection with a virus. It is often called by other names, such as viral gastroenteritis, stomach flu, and food poisoning. Outbreaks are common due to the ease of transmission.

People with norovirus are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill to at least 3 days and perhaps for as long as 2 weeks after recovery, making control of this disease even more difficult.

### Tips to prevent the spread of norovirus

**Practice proper hand hygiene:** Wash your hands carefully with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and changing diapers and always before eating or preparing food. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers (containing at least 62% ethanol) may be a helpful addition to hand washing, but they are not a substitute for washing with soap and water. See "[Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives.](#)"

**Take care in the kitchen:** Carefully wash fruits and vegetables, and cook oysters and other shellfish thoroughly before eating them.

**Do not prepare food while infected:** People who are infected with norovirus should not prepare food for others while they have symptoms and for 3 days after they recover from their illness.

**Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces:** After an episode of illness, such as vomiting or diarrhea, immediately clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces by using a bleach-based household cleaner as directed on the product label or a solution made by adding 5–25 tablespoons of household bleach to 1 gallon of water.

**Wash laundry thoroughly:** Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with vomit or fecal matter. Handle soiled items carefully—without agitating them—to avoid spreading virus. They should be laundered with detergent at the maximum available cycle length and then machine dried.

For more information visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)